



**SABINE MÜLLER, DAS HELLENISTISCHE KÖNIGSPAAR  
IN DER MEDIALEN REPRÄSENTATION: PTOLEMAIOS II.  
UND ARSINOE II. (BEITRÄGE ZUR ALTERTUMSKUNDE  
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Research into Hellenistic Egypt under the rule of the Lagid dynasty has a long tradition, ranging from interdisciplinary studies to more closely focused works on themes as diverse as the historical landscape of Egypt, or on a vast array of archaeological subjects. The Hellenistic states which arose following the death of Alexander the Great introduced new political approaches and practices among the ruling dynasties, different forms of marriage dictated by dynastic imperatives being one of them. The queen sitting on the Lagid throne was accorded special significance in court protocol, and she had a paramount influence on the fate of the state. To a certain extent this represented a reference to some Macedonian patterns, in which previously one can find parallels in the peculiar political positions held by such outstanding queens as Olympias and Eurydike. It definitely established some precedence for the later female scions of the Ptolemaic dynasty, when the queen had often equal power with the king (e.g. Kleopatra II and her brother Ptolemy VIII).

In her unusually erudite study, Sabine Müller (SM) places particular stress on the political aspect of the marriage of Ptolemy II to his sister Arsinoe, who became objects of a new royal cult, the everlasting “Gods Loving their Siblings” the *Theoi Philadelphoi*. During the years of her reign as co-regent of the Lagid state, Arsinoe II exercised an influential role. After her death in 270 BC her cult was officially maintained throughout the whole of the population of Egypt, and not only among the European immigrants. The propagation of the cult was stimulated by the financial support of the state, thanks to which Arsinoe II was accorded a place in all Egyptian sanctuaries. The author in a singularly interesting and learned way analyses various categories of evidence, reconstructing the

imperatives which determined the marriage of the son of Ptolemy I Soter to his full sister. Thanks to this penetrating study carried out by SM, we have the possibility to understand at long last the phenomenon of dynastic marriage, which she approaches from a wide range of perspectives: Greek, Macedonian and Egyptian.

In the introduction (“Einleitung,” pp. 1–17) the author reveals the aim of her research, describes the source material, and also elaborates the present state of research. She sketches the figure of Queen Arsinoe II, elaborating her role in the religious and political spheres and illustrating at the same time the character of Hellenistic monarchy. Furthermore, SM points to various political concepts accompanying the three marriages of Arsinoe II; first to Lysimachos, then to her half brother Ptolemy Keraunos, and in turn to her natural brother Ptolemy II Philadelphos. This chapter finishes with a section describing and presenting the terminology as well as the methodology of the research. The author accentuates the difficulties the Hellenistic monarchies had in emerging in the first place, and the role of the female politicians, making use of the anthropological studies by Pierre Bourdieu, Max Weber and others.

The second chapter (“Heiratspolitik und Dynastiebildung,” pp. 18–84) presents the extensive political aspects of the royal marriages in the process of forming the dynasty. SM shows Ptolemy I, an eminently pragmatic personage, whose marriages to Eurydike and Berenike were of particular importance from the dynastic point of view. She stresses the growth in the political power of Berenike, the third wife of Ptolemy I as well as the mother of his successor Ptolemy II, born in 308 BC. In the last phase of his reign, in the year 285<sup>1</sup> (at the age of around 82), Ptolemy I appointed his son joint ruler. This act was necessitated by the polygamous nature of the court. By it Ptolemy I consciously blocked off the claims of other contenders to the throne. During the period of the three year co-regency his son neutralized his enemies, thereby ensuring his own position. In describing the dynastic policy of Egypt SM compares it with the ineffective dynastic policy of Lysimachos in Thrace, who was likewise polygamous at the beginning, but became subsequently monogamous, taking in his late eighties the young (at that time) Arsinoe II for his wife, which bound the ruler of Thrace to the dynasty ruling Egypt. That Arsinoe entrenched her position is evidenced by the fact of her financing of the construction of the Arsinoeion on Samothrake, and equally by the fact that Lysimachos gave her Herakleia Pontika on the Black Sea. In his marriage Lysimachos was definitely seeking the alliance of Ptolemy I against Antigonos and Demetrios Poliorketes. An analysis of the Macedonian

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<sup>1</sup> Philadelphos officially became joint ruler with his father in 285/284, and only exercised independent rule after 282, Ptolemy I having died in the winter of 283/282.

kingdom of Ptolemy Keraunos and his marriage to Arsinoe is likewise presented in this chapter.

Chapter III (pp. 85–150), which bears the title “Endogame Heiratspolitik,” deals with the next generation of Hellenistic rulers, that is Arsinoe II and Ptolemy II, in which a theme first introduced in the preceding chapter is extensively developed. Already in the introduction to Chapter III SM states that the endogamic union between Arsinoe II and her younger brother Ptolemy II was in a sense a result of the policies of the exogamous and polygamous marriages entered into by Ptolemy I. In 1896 Ulrich Wilcken had already formulated the view that “*die herrschsüchtige Frau durch grosse Überlegenheit und Energie des Willens den jüngeren Bruder zu diesem Schritt genötigt hat*”. Moral judgement regarding intra-family marriage between the Ptolemies still dominates contemporary historiography, however, and this is strongly underlined by SM (there are different positions on the question, including that adopted by Stanley M. Burstein among others (cf. S.M. Burstein, ‘Arsinoe II Philadelphos: A Revisionist View’ in W.L. Adams and E.N. Borza (eds), *Philip II, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Heritage* (Washington 1982), 197–212). The author outlines, perceptively, the many-layered mechanisms that underlay the marriage of Ptolemy II with Arsinoe II, following the dispatch of Philadelphos’s first wife, Arsinoe I, to Koptos, subjecting all manner of aspects of this incestuous marriage to scrutiny, in the context of all sorts of parallels drawn from different traditions: Achaemenid, Macedonian, Hekatomnid, and Egyptian. SM examines such questions as whether the marriage was purely political, or based on previous Egyptian models, including the religious model of the marriage between Isis and her brother Osiris. The author also enquires if court practice was here influenced by the idea of the sacred union between Zeus and Hera. Ptolemy I had previously propagated the myth that his family was directly descended from Zeus through his son Herakles: the Argeads had claimed a similar relationship. It was thus now somewhat easier to justify marriage between members of the Ptolemaic dynasty, appealing to the precedence of the sacred union between Zeus and Hera, both offspring of Kronos, being simultaneously siblings and marriage partners.

The aim of the union between Philadelphos and Arsinoe II, which was treated by Ptolemy as a privilege restricted to royalty, was a guarantee of the continuation of the dynasty. This could only take place through the acquiescence of a loyal wife, she herself being the daughter of Ptolemy I and Berenike I. This consideration, among a host of other factors, all of which are subjected to close scrutiny by the author, ruled out other contenders for the succession.

The fourth chapter, which is entitled “Die mediale Inszenierung des Ptolemäerpaars” is the most extensive of all the parts of the book under review (pp. 156–386). It is a multiple-themed study of the source material, comprising

the epigraphic evidence, both Greek and Egyptian, combined with an analysis of the representations shown on stelai coming from two Lower Egyptian centres, Pithom and Mendes, from the reign of Ptolemy II, together with an analysis of the relevant numismatic evidence, which is treated principally with regard to the portrayal of the royal personage and its parallels found in Alexandrian poetry.

SM subjects the Lagid court to close scrutiny with particular reference to the cult of Dionysios, who was the mythic protoplast of the Lagid family, pointing to two aspects of the cult which are also found at the centre of Ptolemaic ideology: i.e. the concept of euergetism and military success. In due course the author turns to the account of the *pompe* of Ptolemy II written by Kallixeinos of Rhodes, who lived from the reign of Ptolemy II down to the reign of Ptolemy IV. She emphasizes the commemorative character of the festival, both in its Graeco-Macedonian context and in its Egyptian one, and its multidimensional significance: political, social and religious, concentrating on the rich symbolism of the event, which in all probability was associated with the figure of Arsinoe II. Particularly interesting are the results of SM's researches regarding Poseidippos of Pella, the third-century epigrammist, whose works are analysed in a Ptolemaic context, taking into account many elements of Lagid culture, especially religious motifs connected with the figure of Arsinoe II or Berenike I. The works of the poet also contain references to the personages of Ptolemy I, or Ptolemy III, and to Berenike II. In addition this part of the SM's work contains many observations regarding the ruler cult in its aspects of *theoi Soteres*, *theoi adelphoi* and *thea Philadelphos*.

The work of SM is worth recommending to all who take an interest in the Ptolemaic dynasty, whether they be historians or archaeologists. It is a valuable study, dealing with a wide range of source material, which the author takes easily in her stride thanks to her erudition. The imposing amount of literature SM cites (pp. 387–448) is very wide, encompassing many aspects of Egyptian culture in the time of the Ptolemies. Thanks to the multifaceted nature of the work, it constitutes a fundamental and insightful study of the history of all the early Ptolemies, embracing many social and cultural themes (including, e.g., funerary practices) as well as military subjects. Indeed the word propaganda, although rarely used by the author, could be safely applied to the book's theme.

Sławomir Jędraszek